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ABSTRACT

Communication instructors rely on textbook writers to present the latest course content in ways that will motivate students to learn and prepare them for class discussion and activities. Targeting the works they create to reflect student needs and shaping their materials to stimulate and involve their readers, these textbook writers-as-artists develop a work for a course in much the same way a playwright shapes a work for the stage. For those intent on joining the ranks of textbook writers-as-artists, it is wise to follow these ensueing procedures: (1) survey the textbook market in the chosen subject area, (2) identify the type of book to write, (3) identify potential publishers, (4) develop a prospectus, (5) submit the prospectus for review, (6) respond to the review and revise as needed, (7) negotiate the contract, (8) develop a work schedule, (9) write the textbook, (10) rewrite it, (11) obtain necessary permissions, (12) work with the project editor, and (13) work with marketing and sales personnel. (HTH)

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Textbook Development

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DEVELOPING A TEXTBOOK

The following appeared in the October, 1983 issue of Spectra, a publication of the Speech Communication Association. We would like to begin our presentation on Textbook Development by sharing it with you; we believe it exposes some of the problems that individuals who decide to write textbooks face:

> HEADLINE: BOOKS BY MEMBERS
>
> Someone observed that members write books that sometimes do not come to the attention of their colleagues in a timely way. We agree. (And even if writers and publishers do get notices out efficiently, we would like to boast about our members' accomplishments.)
>
> What we have in mind is running occasionally in Spectra a list of recent books published by SCA members. We are thinking mainly of scholarly books, but would welcome information of other non-fiction or fiction or poetry.
>
> THE NEXT LINE WAS THE SHOCKER.
>
> We most definitely do not have in mind textbooks. . .So please do not inform us of materials written primarily for the classroom.

Why is this the attitude advanced by our organization, an organization that acknowledges that among its prime functions is the furtherance of communication education? Why are books written for classroom use not deemed worthy enough to boast about through an organization publication? We would like to

voice our objection to the stance taken by Spectra and through our presentation we hope you will understand why.

Imagine for a moment that you have just been assigned to teach a course you have never taught before. Or that you have been assigned to teach a course you have not taught for many years. Or for that matter that you have again been asked to teach a course which occupies a relatively permanent place in your personal repertoire of courses. Even though each of these situations poses different challenges for you , in each case, there are a number of common questions all professors ask about a course assignment. For example, In what room with I teach the class? At what time of day will the class be scheduled? How many students will be permitted to register for the course? In addition to these stock questions, the professor almost certainly will also ask another question--"What book or books should I require my students to read?" or "What text will I use?"

Within the walls of higher education lies a band of artists who are relied on for content, substance, and motivation in course after course--they are the textbook writers. As instructors we rely heavily upon textbook writers to bring the lastest course content to our students in ways that will motivate them to want to learn, in ways that will prepare them for what we will discuss and do in class, in ways that will help them review what we have accomplished. In

more ways than one the textbook writer provides the framework and backbone of the communication courses we teach. Were it not for the works textbook writers produce instructors would have to spend far more time giving students background information and materials and they would have far less time to spend interacting with students.

To create a text, the textbook writer relies upon personal research and the research of others, but his or her task is not simply one of reporting. In fact, we are convinced that the writer of educational materials faces a problem identical to the one noted by novelist Ernest Hemingway: "It is always how to write truly, and having found what is true, to project what is true, to project it in such a way that it becomes a part of the experiences of the person who reads it." Effective textbook writers target the works they create so that they reflect the needs of the students for whom they are written. To this end, they strive to organize and shape their materials into learning experiences that stimulate and involve their readers. The creative textbook writer provides class instructors with springboards from which students can "dive" into particular bodies of knowledge.

In addition, as Eric Hoffer writes: "The genuine creator creates something that has a life of its own, something that can exist and function without him. . ." This, too, is what the accomplished textbook writer does. We believe the goal

of most successful text writers is to develop materials which may be used inside or outside the classroom setting, materials that are designed to encourage today's students to master a subject area's content. Adept textbook writers also have learned to strive to fulfill the following objective identified by Margaret Mead: "What will have to happen before those who teach learn a new tone of voice so that those who are taught can hear what they say?" The good textbook writer finds that appropriate tone of voice. It is our contention that effective textbook writers are artists, researchers, educators and experimentors--creating and trying out or pretesting materials until they are certain they will precipitate student interest and understanding. In much the same way as a playwright shapes a work for the stage, the textbook writer develops a work for a course.

At this point, we would like to share with you procedures you can follow if you decide to join the ranks of textbook artists.

THE TEXTBOOK WRITER'S GUIDE

Step One. Survey the Textbook Market in your Subject Area.

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of present texts?
  - Content covered v. content overlooked
  - Pedagogical tools used v. tools omitted
- For what level(s) are existing texts written?
  - High v. low level
  - Scholarly v. informal
- Who are the publishers of existing texts?
  - Who has a recently published text v. who does not?
  - Who has a text for a particular level v. who does not?

Step Two. Identify the Type of Book you want to Write.

Step Three. Identify the Publisher(s) You Will Approach

Step Four. Develop Your Prospectus

- Make contact with the editor.
- Follow Publisher Guidelines. Usually, you will need to include:
  - A Brief Description of your Prosed Work. In one or two paragraphs describe your approach and rationale.
  - Features of Your Work. Identify those qualities that distinguish your work; specify pedagogical tools included; highlight how your work will fulfill its objectives.
  - Specify the Book's Intended Length: proposed number of pages.

- Discuss the Competition. Identify those works your proposed text will compete with; discuss the strengths and weakness of these works. Specify how your book will capitalize on existing strengths and overcome existing weakne sses in these works.
- Identify Supplemental Materials that will Accompany Your Work. Will you include a student manual? An instructor's manual? Will you develop a computer software package?
- Identify the Level of Your Text. Discuss the type of student you are writing the text for. Discuss the needs of these students.
- Discuss the Market. In what kinds of schools/departments is the course for your book taught? What kind of potential does your book have?
- Discuss the State of Your Manuscript: How much of the text have you written? How long will it take you to complete a first draft?
- Include a Table of Contents for Your Book. Be sure to use sub-heads.
- Provide Sample Chapters. Usually two is required. Highlight features.
- Attach Your Vitae. Reveal the Teaching experience you have had, your research interests and prior publications.

Step Five. Submit Your Prospectus for Review.

Step Six. Respond to the Reviews and Revise if Needed

Step Seven. Negotiate the Contract

- Good Luck!!!

Step Eight. Develop a Work Schedule.

Step Nine. Write the Textbook.

- Submit Chapters in Stages for Review

Step Ten. Rewrite the Textbook

- Incorporate Reviewer Suggestions.

Step Eleven. Obtain Necessary Permissions.

- Under most conditions you are responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce any copyrighted material in your book. (Anything over 40-50 printed words; all cartoons).

Step Twelve. Work With Your Project Editor.

- Respond to all Queries.

Step Thirteen. Sales--Remember, work with the Marketing People.

- Propose and react to marketing and promotion activities.

In conclusion, writing textbooks is fun and challenging, but it is a lonely pursuit. Few if any textbook writers have the luxury of research assistants or secretarial help--services available to the instructional developers who work in the corporate sector. We have neither National Book Awards nor Pulitzer Prizes to look forward to. But we do have a worthwhile goal--and in the end that's what matters. We'd love to have you join us.